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COUNTRY USSR/Manchuria

CIA

SUBJECT Comments on Trans Siberian Rail Travel

25X1A2g

DATE

PLACE ACQUIRED
(BY SOURCE)

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DATE ACQUIRED May 53
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Supplement to:

Responsive to:

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1. Q. What was the general appearance of various labor groups observed?

A. I didn't observe any labor groups as such. I did see women unloading freight cars in several locations. This was described in [redacted] I do remember seeing women working in the fields. I didn't see any agricultural machinery, only teams of horses pulling plows. I remember noticing that the women tilling the fields were using spades rather than hoes. I never did see any hoes in use.

2. Q. At any time during the trip were the blinds on the railway cars drawn or was source moved away from the windows or points of observation?

A. The shades were never drawn during the daytime but were drawn every night by the railway attendant in our car. I never noticed any security measures of any kind and was never moved away from windows.

3. Q. Can you remember any large excavations near the city of Irkutsk?

[Collector's note: With the aid of a map of the Lake Baykal region and with source's memory of seeing the lake out of the right-hand window of the train, source was able to remember vaguely the trip several hours after leaving the lake.]

A. Although I do not remember any details about Irkutsk itself, I do remember seeing large movements of dirt. As I recall, they seemed to be leveling off a cliff. There were no cranes in use, only bulldozers. I remember them dumping earth over a cliff. This cliff was to our right and was at a level higher than the railroad track. As I remember the dirt did not fall into the water.

4. Q. Describe the condition of the roadbed and track.

A. The only time I noticed the roadbed or track was during our frequent stops. Often I would get off at stations and walk across one or two sets of track. At least at the station there was no grass growing between the ties. I did not notice any new looking ties. Although they were all cut square and creosoted, the dirt between the ties seemed to be a black greasy substance.

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5. Q. In the countryside that you passed through did you notice any snow fences along the road?

A. Yes, I remember noticing snow fences along the railroad about 20 or 30 ft from the track. They were very similar to those in use in the US--sticks tied together standing about four ft high. In some places these were replaced with hedge rows which served the same purpose. I do not remember seeing any telephone or telegraph lines following the line of the railroad track. /Collector's note: [REDACTED] described electric power facilities observed at points where the rail line was being electrified in [REDACTED]

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6. Q. Can you give me any more information about the freight cars? /Source described Soviet rolling stock in [REDACTED] For instance, were any freight cars seen with letters or words on them in any other language or with any letters other than Russian?

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A. No, I didn't see any writing or marking on the cars other than Russian characters.

7. Q. Did the railroad gauge change at Otpor?

A. I don't remember noticing any change in gauge although I do remember we changed trains at Otpor and this required walking some distance. As I recall, no trains ran through Otpor on the same track.

8. Q. Did you notice any tunnels, bridges or ferries?

A. I don't remember going through any tunnels; I am sure there were no ferries; and there were very few bridges. I don't remember any large bridges--most of them were wooden tressel type bridges with no superstructure rising as high as the window level of the train.

9. Q. Do you remember seeing highways running alongside the track?

A. No, I do not remember seeing any paved highways or even any roads running alongside the track. On what roads I did see there were no automatic crossing signals of any kind and while passing through the countryside I never saw any automobiles on these roads, only horse-drawn wagons.

10. Q. While on the train were passenger cars equipped with radio loud-speakers?

A. Yes, there were loud speakers on the train which provided music for the passengers. Although at first I thought we were receiving regular radio programs, I later decided that due to the repetition of several compositions they were merely records being played somewhere on the train. There were no speaking programs. I don't remember any voice communications over this system.

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